

## The Federal Diary

# Comptroller Orders an End To Primping on G. A. O. Time

**Employees Who Powder Noses Ahead Of Time, So as to Run When Bell Rings, Must Be Reported, Brown Says**

By Alfred Friendly

General Accounting Office Employees may not powder noses or straighten neckties preparatory to springing from their chairs on the stroke of the 4:30 bell, Comptroller General Brown warned yesterday. Instead, he said, they must render "seven hours of faithful service" and not stop working a second before quitting time.

"It is observed," Brown said in a memorandum to his division chiefs, "that some of our employees stop work before official quitting time, apparently for the purpose of making themselves ready to leave the building exactly when the bell rings

### Violators to Be Reported

"It is a rule of this office that all employees shall be at their stations of duty at the time set for work to begin and render seven hours of faithful service.

"All supervisory officials are expected to require a strict observance of this rule and report the names of all violators."

Brown's ukase against jumping the gun carries on the G. A. O. reputation of being Washington's most machine-like, regimented and soulless Government office.

### A Strict Office

Unlike almost any other Federal clerical agency, at the G. A. O.

Employees may not receive personal phone calls at their desks. Incoming calls are questioned by the phone operators to determine if they are official.

Callers may not proceed to their destination, but must first go to the office of the chief clerk to state their business.

Other Comptroller General rulings yesterday:

Government employees are not entitled to military leave pay when called into service as Reserve officers in time of emergency. They obtain military leave with pay only during training periods not exceeding 15 days a year.

Temporary employees on a per diem, 5-day, 40-hour week basis are not entitled to pay for a holiday even though the holiday occurs on a day when they would ordinarily be working.

**ODDENDA:** When dignified Supreme Court Justice Harlan Fiske Stone wants his car and chauffeur, he places two fingers in his mouth and gives vent to an ear-splitting whistle, the envy of school boys for blocks around . . . Resigned comment of a secretary whose boss is never at his desk: "He's out con-

ferencing around" . . . The Government lost \$783,000 in 800 fires on Federal property in the 1938 fiscal year. In the District, the loss was only \$5,609, or less than one-thousandth of one per cent of the value subject to loss.

Secretary Wallace did not know it at the time, but his recent speech to the land grant colleges association was the scenario of a new Pare Lorenz film for the AAA. The theme was conservation—not only of land and soil and water, but of humanity

In that speech, incidentally, Wallace recalled a little-remembered quotation of Patrick Henry, "He is the greatest patriot who stops the most gullies."

Admiral Byrd's expedition to Antarctica will stuff its collective knapsacks with some new dairy foods, not yet on the market. They were made of skim milk derivatives by the Bureau of Dairy Industry and include dried pea soup, wafers made of potatoes, skim milk and salt and caramels and fudge—the sissies!—containing whey solids.

Strategy behind the President's Merit System Improvement Committee moves is to submit its report before Congress convenes as a means of encouraging passage of the Ramspeck bill to extend civil service. The legislation has a privileged place on the House calendar and will be among the first orders of business of the next session. The committee report contains a thumping indorsement of the bill.

Although the committee will hold hearings beginning December 8, when friends of veterans' preference will have their day in court, those who know what they are talking about insist that the committee remains unchanged in its plan drastically to pare the preferences down. Gen. Robert E. Wood is the veterans' best advocate on the committee, and will stick against removing the preferences for peacetime veterans. He is agreed, however, on requiring all applicants to get a passing grade before addition of the 5 and 10-point bonuses, on ending the provision placing disabled veterans at the top of the list, and ending the waiver of age limits for veterans.

Civil Service exams: Operator of bulldozer and patrol grade, 65 cents an hour, and power shovel, \$1.10 an hour, Public Roads Administration, Beltsville, Md.; ordnance material inspectors, \$1,620 to \$2,600, War Department; protozoologist, associate and assistant, from \$2,600 to \$3,800, Bureau of Animal Industry.